

FORENSIC EPIDEMIOLOGY:

JOINT TRAINING FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS ON CONCURRENT INVESTIGATIVE RESPONSES TO BIOTERRORISM THREATS AND ATTACKS

Events of fall 2001, including the anthrax attacks and the thousands of biologic threats and hoaxes, required law enforcement, other public safety, and public health agencies to work together in ways without precedent. The concurrent responses to such threats affirmed the many similarities in the goals and investigative methods used by both law enforcement and public health officials, but also highlighted salient differences in the different disciplines' approaches. To foster improved understanding of the investigative goals and methods specific to each discipline and to strengthen interdisciplinary collaborative effectiveness in response to future attacks involving biological agents, in spring 2002, the Public Health Law Program (<http://www.phppo.cdc.gov/od/phlp>) of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in partnership with other agencies and organizations, undertook development of a course for the joint training of law enforcement and public health officials. This course has been referred to frequently as the "Forensic Epidemiology" course.

Training goal: A primary goal for the training course is **to enhance the joint effectiveness of law enforcement and public health** when both disciplines conduct concurrent investigations in response to a threat or attack involving possible biological weapons.

Training strategies: The course's centerpiece is a set of **3 fact-based case scenarios** worked through by small groups; the small groups, which include equal numbers of law enforcement and public health officials, address key objectives by reviewing sets of facts then answer questions matched to the objectives. The objectives span a spectrum of issues, including, for example: conducting epidemiological investigations and public health responses in the setting of a crime scene; **meshing criminal investigative procedures with epidemiological, laboratory, and other scientific procedures** in such settings; and joint law enforcement and public health operations and communications. In addition to improving understanding of relevant laws, approaches, and procedures, the course's delivery is designed to **increase participants' familiarity with their law enforcement and public health counterparts** in their home jurisdictions. The module also employs a **"train-the-trainers" strategy** to emphasize peer teaching and to create a force-multiplier capacity for sustainable, additional training within a state or other jurisdictional level.

Course agenda: The course is designed to be given in three 1/2-day sessions:

First 1/2-day (morning)

- Participants convene for a series of three background presentations to establish a common understanding of discipline-specific goals, methods, and vocabulary:
 - Law Enforcement for Public Health Officials
 - Public Health for Law Enforcement Officials
 - Role of the Criminal and Public Health Laboratory

Second 1/2-day (afternoon)

- Participants break into smaller groups led by a pair of previously trained co-facilitators and work through scenarios I and II:
 - Scenario I: "Suspicious Letter in DeKalb County"
 - Scenario II: "Anthrax in Florida"

Third 1/2-day (morning)

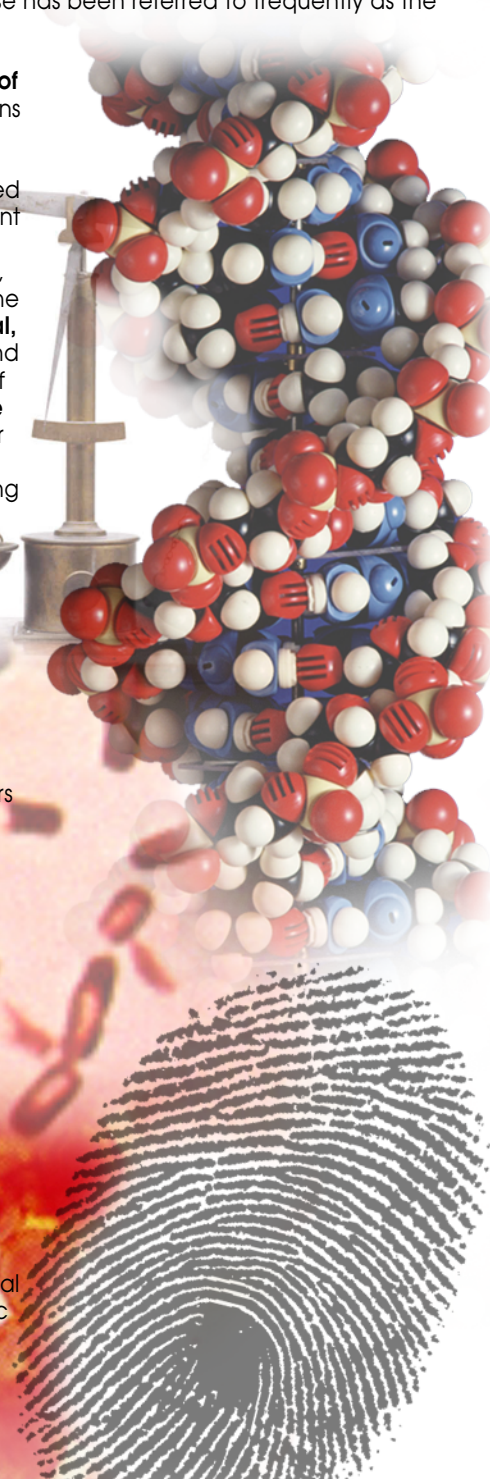
- Small groups work through scenario III then reconvene as a large group:
 - Scenario III: "Salmonellosis in Oregon"
 - Large group: reports from small groups on issues for possible after-action plan

Course Pilots

The "Forensic Epidemiology" course has been successfully piloted four times:

- Chapel Hill, North Carolina (November 4-5, 2002)
- Jacksonville, Florida (December 3-4, 2002)
- Baltimore, Maryland (December 17-18, 2002)
- Los Angeles, California (January 15-16, 2003)

Each course pilot was customized for the locale but consisted of the same core groups: state and local public health, state and local law enforcement (police departments or sheriff's offices), state public health laboratories, the jurisdictional field offices of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the jurisdictional U.S. Attorney's Office, and local schools of public health.



PLANNING YOUR JURISDICTION'S FORENSIC EPIDEMIOLOGY COURSE

In April 2003, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) sponsored a "train-the-course managers" workshop designed to equip attendees with the information, materials, and facilitation skills needed to conduct the Forensic Epidemiology course in their districts/regions. 250 persons representing local and state public health, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the U.S. Attorneys' offices attended the meeting.

Forensic Epidemiology Course Manager's Guide: The Forensic Epidemiology Course Manager's Guide is a self-contained package that can be used as an instructional template in any jurisdiction in the United States. The guide's focus is to summarize and simplify the 10 important items that must be done to implement the Forensic Epidemiology course.

1. Establish a local planning committee
2. Select course design
3. Select a facility
4. Choose participants
5. Select presenters
6. Elect facilitators from the participants
7. Assemble binders
8. Conduct facilitator training
9. Determine breakout groups
10. Conduct training

The guide provides detailed information on planning, course design, and logistics, and includes template presentations, case scenarios, and supplemental reference material. The guide, currently packaged as a CD, is available from the CDC. To obtain a copy of the CD, please contact Mr. Darrell Reid at 770-488-2852 or dreid@cdc.gov.

Planning Assistance: As a result of the CDC-DOJ "train-the-course managers" workshop, the CDC has made available a product support service to respond to course organizer and course instructor requests. The technical assistance provided will help course organizers, typically law enforcement and public health program managers and senior officials, to plan and organize this training.

Technical assistance for national dissemination and delivery of Forensic Epidemiology is available to all jurisdictions. Services available include assistance in the following:

- Identifying appropriate members of your local planning committee
- Selecting the optimal course design for your locale
- Organizing and prioritizing logistics
- Locating the best presenters for each presentation to be given
- Deciding on a suitable audience
- Choosing the right facilitators for your small groups
- Tailoring the teaching materials to your audiences
- Customizing the content to reflect local and cross-jurisdictional priorities

In selected situations, it may be possible to provide on-site technical assistance by a skilled professional with a thorough background and understanding of all aspects of this course.

For more information regarding technical assistance in the organization and planning of Forensic Epidemiology, contact:

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